As a symphony depends on a variety of instruments, effective management utilizes the strengths of its staff to keep associations in tune.

In the community association industry, managers are expected to be all things to all people. They are expected to have a wide variety of skills and fill numerous roles, while running a complex organization. Management companies want to earn profits and gain the respect of association leaders and members, but too much of the load is on their manager's shoulders. The result is often dissatisfaction, frustration, and burnout. A system called Management by Teams of Specialists (Mates), developed by Association Management, Inc., of Houston, Texas, takes the burden off of the individual manager. Mates uses five-member teams to handle all of the management responsibilities for the association. By using teams, more skills are focused on the management process, and human resources are more effectively utilized. As David L. Bradford and Allan R. Cohen wrote in their book Managing for Excellence, "Rather than expecting one person to be able to perform perfectly at all times, it is more realistic to expect that a richer variety of leadership skills will exist among the total membership of the management team."

MANAGEMENT SKILLS No other professional is expected to have the broad range of skills required of the community association manager. Managers often need the skills of accountants, attorneys, insurance professionals, diplomats, psychologists, sociologists, horticulturists, homebuilders, and conservationists. Experts have identified three skill areas necessary in management: conceptual, technical, and human. Whereas most experts say that people with these specific skills should work together as a team, community association managers are expected to have all of these skills, and to do them well. A study conducted by the Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM) Foundation confirmed the difficulties inherent in community association management. IREM commissioned Potential Unlimited, Inc., a firm specializing in employment behavioral analysis and research, to measure and report on the correlation between behavioral traits and specific property management tasks. The study found that "The jobs of community association managers are some of the most difficult and demanding positions in business. These difficulties include not only being able to do the job well, but also—and especially—being able to continue doing the job over time. The questions of longevity and survivability in association management work make it especially hard to recruit and select appropriate people. This is primarily because, more than most other businesses, community management usually requires human beings to continually deal with conflicting contradictory behavior."

MANAGEMENT ROLES University of California at Los Angeles professor Ichak Adizes, in his book How to Solve the Mismanagement Crisis, determined that management has to perform four roles: producing, implementing, innovating, and integrating. "One individual alone cannot perform all four roles," he concluded. "Those who are outstanding with respect to ideas and planning are usually
weak on implementation; others who excel in implementation might be poor motivators; those who excel in motivating might have problems running a tight ship; and those who are capable of running things smoothly usually are weak in introducing changes and accepting new ideas . . . The four roles are in conflict and no one person can perform them simultaneously. When an individual attempts to do so, the result is generally mismanagement." The complexity of community associations makes juggling these roles especially difficult. Associations are made up of four interrelated subsystems: the physical property under the association's control or authority; the members who are property owners of real property under the jurisdiction of the association; the association leadership appointed or elected to conduct the business of the association; and management, which implements the decisions of the association leadership. These four subsystems clearly relate to the four roles to be performed by management. But community associations have additional complexities. For example, there is involuntary automatic membership which results in individuals becoming members whether they wish to or not; the voluntary nature of the association leadership compounded by the political process; and the dominance of members of the association vis-a-vis management. It is unreasonable to expect an individual to perform all of the management roles, and handle all the tasks required of a community association manager. Very few people have the broad range of technical skills and intellectual and psychological traits required of a community association manager. To build a successful industry on these individuals who are so few and far between is doomed to failure, and is possibly a major factor in community association management firms that meet an early demise.

MaTeS CONCEPT The MaTeS system alters management office organization to better utilize individual strengths. It takes into account the skills required of community association management, the behavioral traits of individuals, management roles, and the complexity of the community association organization. It is tried and tested, and has proven itself successful for over a decade. Five-member teams manage the associations. Each of the five individuals have specific behavior traits, roles, and responsibilities: * Administrator--A detail oriented individual who is responsible for the administration of the business affairs of the association, organizing and attending meetings of directors and members, maintaining the association's records, and acting as liaison between the association's board of directors and its members. The administrator must have the ability to lead and motivate the team. * Inspector--A technologically oriented individual who inspects the physical property on a weekly basis to check maintenance needs, contractor performance, and compliance with restrictive covenants. * Service Representative--An empathetic, nurturing individual who receives all service requests from homeowners and directs contractors to perform the necessary work, This individual is well organized, able to listen, and has a desire to help others by dealing with their service requests in an efficient manner as possible. The service representative has the human skills that are needed. * Bookkeeper--The bookkeeper is responsible for collecting assessments, posting receivables, following up on delinquencies, paying vendors, posting payables, and maintaining full and correct fiscal records for associations managed by the team. * Secretary--The secretary is responsible for typing notices of meetings, reports and documents, and communications with directors, homeowners, residents, and others in the administration of the association. The MaTeS concept works as well for small firms managing less than five community associations as it does for large ones managing over 50 associations. It allows firms to plan for future growth, while utilizing human resources more effectively and profitably. The one person management firm can plan future expansion and, as the need arises, employ individuals to perform roles for which they have specific skills. "No one manager can manage alone," wrote Ichak Adizes. "It takes several [people] to perform roles which seem to be in conflict, but really are complimentary." When it comes to community association management offices, five heads are better than one.

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